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## DOCTUS CATULLUS

The word *doctus* is used by Latin writers as a standing epithet of poets, like *σοφός* in Greek. Ellis (*Commentary on Catullus* 35. 17) defines the *doctus poeta* as one who is "trained to understand poetry or to write poems." Martial opposes the *doctus* to the *rusticulus libellus*.

*Doctus* is used especially often of Catullus, and in the general sense indicated above is especially appropriate to him. But the common assertion that when used of him it had reference particularly or solely to his "learned poems"<sup>1</sup> and "acquired a special meaning,"<sup>2</sup> implying the characteristics of Alexandrian poetry, seems to lack adequate support in the actual usage of Latin writers.

Note first the use of the epithet in Catullus' own time. He himself applies it to the prose works of Nepos (1. 7), the Muses (65. 2), and a poetess whose talent he compares, not to any Alexandrian poet, but to Sappho. He does not use it of Calvus or of Cinna. Lucretius (2. 600) uses it of Greek poets in general, Cicero of Hesiod (*Cat. Mai.* 54) and of Lucilius (*De orat.* 2. 25).

By later writers *doctus* is used of Catullus more frequently than any other adjective (though by no means to the exclusion of others). It is applied to him by Lygdamus (Tibull. 3. 6. 4), Ovid (*Am.* 3. 9. 62), and Martial (1. 61. 1; 7. 99. 7; 8. 73. 8; 14. 100; 14. 152). Propertius applies it to Catullus' fellow-poet Calvus (2. 34. 89).

But these same writers use *doctus* of other poets certainly not to be classed as Alexandrian. Propertius (3. 20. 8) applies it to the grandfather of Cynthia, who, whether or not he was the epic poet Hostius, is likely to have lived too early to have come much under Alexandrian influence. Ovid uses it of the Sirens! Martial uses it of Albinovanus Pedo (2. 77. 5), and implies it of Sappho (10. 35. 16): *Esses doctior et pudica, Sappho*; and of Homer (7. 46. 2): *Maeonioque cupis doctius ore loqui*, while Tibullus, the least Alexandrian of Roman elegiac poets, says to the young *doctos amate poetas*, and Statius, contemporary with Martial, applies the same adjective impartially to Callimachus (*docta Cyrene, Silv.* 5. 3. 108), and to Lucretius (*Silv.* 2. 7. 76).

Moreover, there seems to be not more than one passage (Tibull. 3. 6. 41) where *doctus* is applied to Catullus himself in connection with one of his "learned" poems. Martial's allusions are to the Lesbia poems and other *nugae*<sup>3</sup> (where any are specified), and while he represents himself as of the same class of poets as Catullus and as his imitator, he contrasts his own poetry with that of Callimachus (10. 4) and sneers at the obscurity of Cinna (10. 21).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Teuffel (Warr), *History of Roman Literature*, p. 393.

<sup>2</sup> Ellis, *Prolegomena to Catullus*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>3</sup> Terentianus Maurus also calls Catullus *doctus* when quoting from a poem of the same type—No. 1.

In view of these facts it would seem that in the opinion of other Roman writers Catullus was entitled to the epithet *doctus* as much from his imitations of Sappho as of Callimachus,<sup>1</sup> and that in applying it to him they had in mind merely such high poetic quality as the word implied when used of other poets.

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<sup>1</sup> For a similar conclusion see an article on *doctus Catullus* in *Atene e Roma*, December, 1911.